

DATELINE NO. 68: JACKSONVILLE, FLA.
RUSSELL SPLANE

APRIL 14, 1976

JACKSONVILLE: A CITY REBORN
(VOICED PIECE, INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR: AND NOW THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS DATELINE...ANOTHER
IN THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS
IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY, OUR DATELINE IS JACKSONVILLE,
FLORIDA, A CITY REBORN, AS THIS REPORT FROM VOA CORRESPONDENT
RUSSELL SPLANE EXPLAINS:

VOICE: IT'S A NEW CITY ALL RIGHT, THIS METROPOLIS OF SIX HUNDRED
THOUSAND PEOPLE ALONG THE BANKS OF THE HISTORIC SAINT JOHNS
RIVER IN NORTHEAST FLORIDA. FOR THOSE WHO KNEW
JACKSONVILLE AS IT USED TO BE JUST A FEW YEARS AGO,
IT'S A CITY RE-BORN -- AND IT TOOK A BOLD MOVE TO BRING
ABOUT THIS MIRACLE. THE CITY ALWAYS HAS BEEN BLESSED WITH
CERTAIN NATURAL ADVANTAGES. THE WIDE SAINT JOHNS RIVER --
NOW DREDGED TO A DEPTH OF ELEVEN AND ONE-HALF METERS --
PERMITS THE LARGEST OF OCEAN GOING VESSELS TO STEAM RIGHT
UP TO THE HEART OF THE CITY TWENTY KILOMETERS OR SO
INLAND TO DISCHARGE OR LOAD CARGO. BUT BACK IN THE NINETEEN
SIXTIES, JACKSONVILLE WAS A DISINTEGRATING AND DECREPIT
CITY. ONE CRITIC DESCRIBED IT AS A "NIGHTMARE" WHERE THE
ONLY PRESENTABLE BUILDINGS WERE THE ONES THAT POLITICIANS HAD
BUILT AS MONUMENTS TO THEMSELVES.

MUCH OF THE PROBLEM STEMMED FROM THE INEFFICIENCY OF THE
GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION WITH BOTH A CITY AND A COUNTY
GOVERNMENT VYING WITH EACH OTHER TO SEE WHICH COULD PROVIDE
THE MOST -- OR MORE OFTEN, THE LEAST -- SERVICES FOR THE AREA.

VOICE: THE FREQUENT DUPLICATION WAS COSTLY AND THE RESULTS WOEFULLY
(CONT'D) INADEQUATE.

IN NINETEEN SIXTY-FIVE, A GROUP OF TWENTY-THREE JACKSONVILLE CITIZENS HAD AN IDEA. THEY ASKED THE FLORIDA STATE LEGISLATURE TO AUTHORIZE A REORGANIZATION PLAN THAT WOULD MERGE DUVAL COUNTY AND THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE INTO ONE ENTITY. THE PLAN WAS LAID BEFORE THE VOTERS IN A REFERENDUM IN NINETEEN SIXTY-SEVEN AND WAS APPROVED BY A TWO-TO-ONE MARGIN. THE CITY OF JACKSONVILLE WAS TO BE EXPANDED TO INCLUDE ALL OF DUVAL COUNTY. WITH A LAND AREA OF TWENTY-ONE HUNDRED FORTY SQUARE KILOMETERS, JACKSONVILLE HAD SUDDENLY BECOME THE LARGEST CITY IN THE CONTINENTAL UNITED STATES.

HANS TANZLER -- WHO TOOK OFFICE AS JACKSONVILLE'S MAYOR JUST BEFORE THE MERGER -- EXPLAINS THIS BOLD MOVE:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- TANZLER

"WHAT WE DID WAS TO CONSOLIDATE. WE DECIDED TO DO AWAY WITH THE COUNTY LAYER OF GOVERNMENT AND REPLACE IT WITH A SINGLE GOVERNMENT. WE CALLED IT CONSOLIDATION. OTHER CITIES THAT HAVE FOLLOWED IT CALLED IT METRO GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE SEVERAL NAMES -- BUT IN ESSENCE, WHAT IT DOES IS TO ELIMINATE SOME OF THE DUPLICATION OF REPETITIOUS LAYERS OF GOVERNMENT."

VOICE: THE NEW CONSOLIDATED GOVERNMENT TOOK OFFICE IN NINETEEN SIXTY-EIGHT. WHILE IT'S BEEN BUSY STREAMLINING THE CITY ADMINISTRATION, OTHER FORCES HAVE BEEN AT WORK RE-BUILDING THE RUN-DOWN CITY. DECREPIT BUILDINGS THAT MADE MUCH OF THE DOWNTOWN AREA LOOK LIKE A SLUM DISTRICT WERE TAKEN DOWN. IN THEIR PLACE WENT MODERN SKYSCRAPERS, HOTELS AND OFFICE BUILDINGS, DOMINATED BY THE SOARING INDEPENDENT LIFE

VOICE: INSURANCE BUILDING, AT ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO METERS THE
(CONT'D) TALLEST BUILDING IN FLORIDA. THE TOWER IS FACED ON ALL
SIDES WITH REFLECTIVE GLASS THAT MAKES THE ENTIRE STRUCTURE
SHIMMER LIKE A JEWEL.

MEANWHILE, ANOTHER PROBLEM -- POLLUTION OF THE SAINT JOHNS
RIVER -- HAS BEEN TACKLED. MAYOR TANZLER IS ALSO FAMILIAR
WITH THIS PROJECT:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- TANZLER

"WHEN I FIRST CAME IN OFFICE THERE WERE SOMETHING LIKE
FIFTY-ONE OUTFALLS -- THAT IS GREAT, BIG, HUGE STORM
DRAINAGE PIPES EMPTYING RAW SEWERS STRAIGHT INTO THE SAINT
JOHNS RIVER. WHEN I CAME IN OFFICE WE IMMEDIATELY EMBARKED
ON A HUNDRED AND THIRTY MILLION DOLLARS PROGRAM TO CLEAN
UP THE RIVER. WE ARE PUTTING IN TRANSMISSION LINES,
PUMPING STATIONS THAT NOW TREAT ALL THOSE OUTFALLS, AND
AS THE RESULT OF THIS, THE CONDITION OF THE WATER HAS VASTLY
IMPROVED -- THE CLARITY OF IT -- THE ENTIRE RESTORATIVE
PROCESS IS BEGINNING TO TAKE PLACE."

VOICE: SO WHAT HAS THIS RIVER RECLAMATION PROJECT MEANT TO THE
BOLD NEW CITY OF JACKSONVILLE? A RECENT INCIDENT AT CITY
HALL TELLS THE STORY. A VISITOR CAME BY TO SEE MAYOR
TANZLER. "HE'S NOT HERE," HIS SECRETARY SAID. "EVER
SINCE THE RIVER WAS CLEANED UP AND THE GAME FISH CAME
BACK," SHE EXPLAINED, "HE'S BEEN TAKING OFF NOW AND THEN
TO GO FISHING FOR TROUT OVER BY THE UTILITIES PLANT."

ANNCR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO DATELINE...ANOTHER IN THE SERIES
OF VOA PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE
UNITED STATES. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT----- (AT THIS TIME)
FOR ANOTHER...DATELINE.

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